



# CERTIFICATION THROUGH PORTFOLIO GENERAL HANDBOOK

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## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook provides important information about the ANCC policies, processes, and procedures for those interested in obtaining ANCC specialty certification by portfolio assessment and an overview of information on renewing certification.

More detailed ANCC certification through portfolio information, including information related to specific specialties—such as portfolio specifications—can be obtained at ANCC’s website at [www.nursecredentialing.org](http://www.nursecredentialing.org) or by calling 1.800.284.2378.

## ABOUT ANCC CERTIFICATION THROUGH PORTFOLIO

ANCC developed the certification through portfolio as an alternative method for certifying individual registered nurses and advanced practice registered nurses in specialties where the number of potential certificants is too limited to support a psychometrically sound and legally defensible certification examination. Candidates who successfully complete this peer-review process will receive ANCC certification in their specialty.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and many employers and health insurance companies recognize ANCC certifications.

### Non-Discrimination

All ANCC programs are administered without discrimination on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, gender, health status, lifestyle, nationality, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

## WHAT IS CERTIFICATION?

Certification is the process by which a nongovernmental agency or an association grants recognition to an individual who has met certain predetermined qualifications. Generally, certification can be used for entry into practice, validation of competence, recognition of excellence, and/or for regulation. It can be mandatory or voluntary. Certification validates an individual’s knowledge and skills in a defined role and clinical area of practice, based on standards developed by experts in the specialty.

## HOW ARE PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENTS DEVELOPED?

ANCC portfolio assessments are developed consistent with the technical guidelines recommended by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (AERA, APA, NCME; 1999).

Each portfolio assessment is developed by ANCC in cooperation with a Content Expert Panel (CEP) composed of carefully selected experts in the field. CEPs analyze the professional skills and abilities from a logical job analysis, which provides the evidence for the portfolio assessment specifications.

The validity and reliability of the portfolio assessments are monitored by ANCC staff. Portfolio assessments are updated approximately every 3 years.

## HOW ARE PORTFOLIOS SCORED?

ANCC reports the portfolio assessment results as pass or fail. If an applicant fails, the report includes diagnostic feedback for each of the content domains as covered in the portfolio specifications.

ANCC uses a criterion-referenced approach in evaluating the portfolio, which means that an applicant's performance on the portfolio is **not** compared to that of other applicants in determining the applicant's pass/fail status. In a criterion-referenced assessment, an applicant must achieve a score equal to or greater than the minimum passing score for the portfolio. The minimum passing score reflects the point of minimal competency for entry level as a certified practitioner. With the guidance of a measurement expert (e.g., a psychometrician), a panel of subject matter experts in the nursing specialty recommends the minimum passing score for the portfolio. In setting the minimum passing score, ANCC uses the Modified Angoff Method, which is well-recognized within the measurement field.

Portfolio assessment results are reported on a scale with a maximum possible score of 500. To pass the ANCC portfolio assessment, an applicant must achieve a scale score of 350 or higher. Prior to conversion of an applicant's score to this scale, the applicant's weighted raw score on the portfolio is determined. The weighted raw score is then converted to a scale score by using a conversion formula.

Applicants who achieve a scale score of 350 or higher will receive a report that notifies them of their "pass" status.

For applicants who do not achieve a scale score of at least 350, the score report will show the scale score achieved, "fail" status, and diagnostic feedback for each of the content domains covered by the portfolio. Applicants will only receive diagnostic feedback for the four content domains and not on the Supervisor or Peer Evaluation or the Self-Evaluation.

### The diagnostic feedback categories are:

**LOW** The score you obtained for this content domain is below an acceptable level. Substantial improvement in this content domain is recommended prior to reapplying for certification through portfolio.

**MEDIUM** The score you obtained for this content domain is marginally acceptable; however, further improvement in this content area is recommended prior to reapplying for certification through portfolio.

**HIGH** The score you obtained for this content domain is well above average; however, further review of this content domain may be helpful prior to reapplying for certification through portfolio.

The diagnostic feedback is intended to identify content domains that contributed to a failing score. The purpose of the diagnostic feedback is to help failing candidates tailor their portfolio submission in the future.

Please note, reporting the score in scale format does not affect the pass/fail status of an applicant. The pass/fail status is determined based on whether the applicant's portfolio meets the established scoring criteria.

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIAL CERTIFICATION

You must meet all the eligibility requirements for the certification you are seeking. If you do not meet all the eligibility requirements when you apply, your portfolio will not be reviewed. The specific eligibility requirements for your certification are available at [www.nursecredentialing.org/certification.aspx#specialty](http://www.nursecredentialing.org/certification.aspx#specialty).

*For certifications that require academic transcripts for eligibility:* transcripts must be original documents, in sealed envelopes sent directly from the university registrar's office, and must include the degree-awarded date (degree-conferral date). Transcripts may be sent electronically directly from the university registrar's office to [certification@ana.org](mailto:certification@ana.org).

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All practice requirements must have been met while holding an active registered nurse license in a U.S. state or territory or the professional, legally recognized equivalent in another country. Any hours of practice as a licensed practical nurse OR as a licensed vocational nurse OR working outside the nursing field do not qualify as part of the practice hour requirement. Practice hours may be obtained through your employment or volunteer service.

All fees must be paid at the time your application is submitted to ANCC. Applications received with insufficient funds delay the review of your application for eligibility and delay your portfolio review.

Applications received with missing documentation (including signatures) delay the review of your application for eligibility and delay your portfolio review.

## SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

ANCC provides reasonable accommodations for candidates with documented disabilities as required by law. If you have a disability, you must notify ANCC by submitting a request for accommodation with supporting documentation from your physician or a qualified healthcare professional. The information must be on the physician's or other qualified healthcare professional's letterhead, typed, dated, and signed by the healthcare professional, and explain why the accommodation is necessary.

The documentation must document the following information in order to be considered:

- ▶ A specific diagnosis and date of your diagnosis.
- ▶ Specific and current findings that support your diagnosis (relevant medical history and tests administered; date of the most current evaluation, within the last 3 years).
- ▶ A description of your substantial day-to-day functional limitations resulting from your stated disabilities.
- ▶ Specific recommendations for the accommodation, including a detailed explanation of why the accommodation is needed.

**Important Note:** *Additional information may be requested after a review of your information.*

## INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS

International applicants may apply for specialty certification through portfolio assessment. International applications must follow the same requirements as national applicants for initial certification and renewal. All applications must be submitted in English.

Contact the ANCC Customer Care Center at 1.800.284.2378 or 301.628.5000 or [certification@ana.org](mailto:certification@ana.org) for details or if you have additional questions.

## PREPARING FOR THE PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Please review the Certification Through Portfolio Application Requirements found at [www.nursecredentialing.org/CertificationPortfolioRequirements](http://www.nursecredentialing.org/CertificationPortfolioRequirements) for additional information about how to prepare for certification through portfolio.

### Portfolio Specifications

You can find the portfolio specifications on the ANCC website. The portfolio specifications include the domains of practice and identify what you must include in your portfolio. A detailed description of the performance evaluation requirements for each specialty can be found on the ANCC website at [www.nursecredentialing.org/certification.aspx#specialty](http://www.nursecredentialing.org/certification.aspx#specialty).

## MAINTAINING YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

### Change of Address

If you have a change to any of your contact information, please call us at 1.800.284.2378 or update “Access My Account” on [www.nursecredentialing.org](http://www.nursecredentialing.org) to inform us of the change, so we can ensure you receive all correspondence.

### Change of Legal Name

Requests for legal name change due to marriage, divorce, or a court-approved legal name change must be sent in writing with a copy of the marriage certificate, divorce decree, or court-approved legal name change document. For clinicians who have applied in the past under one name and are currently applying under a different name, please note that ANCC requires copies of legal name change documents before proceeding with the application review process.

Send a request for legal name change by mail with accompanying documentation to:

ANCC Certification  
ATTN: Name Change  
8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 400  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

If you are currently certified and have already been issued a wall certificate but wish to order a duplicate wall certificate with your new legal name, please send a completed Duplicate Wall Certificate Order Form (available at [www.nursecredentialing.org/Certification/CertificationPolicies/WallOrderCertificationForm.aspx](http://www.nursecredentialing.org/Certification/CertificationPolicies/WallOrderCertificationForm.aspx)) with payment to:

ANCC Certification  
ATTN: Duplicate Wall Certificate  
8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 400  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

## WITHDRAWAL OF PORTFOLIO

Candidates may withdraw their portfolio at any time between application submission and the receipt of email notification that their portfolio has been sent to appraisers for assessment. Requests for withdrawal must be received by ANCC in writing before the portfolio is sent to the appraisers. An administrative fee and any special fees are nonrefundable. If you decide to apply for certification again, you must complete a new application (including all portfolio components), pay all applicable fees, and meet all eligibility requirements in effect for the year in which you reapply.

Send a written request for withdrawal by mail or email to:

Mail: ANCC  
ATTN: Certification Withdrawal  
8515 Georgia Ave, Suite 400  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3492

Email: [certification@ana.org](mailto:certification@ana.org)  
Subject: Certification Withdrawal

## AFTER THE ASSESSMENT

Candidates will be notified in writing by ANCC of the results of their portfolio assessment. To protect candidates' privacy and ensure no misinterpretations occur, assessment results are not released by telephone, fax, or email for any reason.

Your certification start date is the date on which the passing score was determined.

Your certificate and ANCC pin are mailed to you approximately 8 weeks after you have successfully passed your portfolio assessment. You will also receive an official letter from ANCC with the specific dates of your 3-year certification period.

### Verification of Certification

Verification is not automatically provided. You may request your one free verification of certification at [www.nursecredentialing.org/certification/verifycertification.aspx](http://www.nursecredentialing.org/certification/verifycertification.aspx).

Additional verifications of certification can also be ordered from this site. ANCC does not automatically send verification to your state board of nursing or employer. Please request the verifications you need.

### Portfolio Scoring

Portfolio results are pass or fail. If you fail, your score report will include diagnostic information for each content area of the portfolio.

### Resubmission

If you do not pass the portfolio assessment, you will be required to submit a new application (including all portfolio sections) and pay all applicable fees and you must meet eligibility requirements in effect at the time of resubmission. ANCC may require additional supporting documentation to determine eligibility.

## MAINTAINING YOUR CERTIFICATION

As an ANCC board-certified professional, you must meet specified requirements in order to maintain and renew your certification every 3 years. The purposes of maintaining your certification are to provide evidence that you have continued to expand your professional knowledge to demonstrate evidence of continual competence in your certification specialty. It also allows you to continue to use your ANCC credentials.

### Certification Renewal

To avoid a lapse in certification, you must renew your certification before your current certification period expires. To renew, you must complete a renewal application, meet all renewal requirements in effect at the time you apply, and pay all applicable fees. Renewal applications received without the correct fee and supporting documentation are considered incomplete and your renewal will be delayed until the application is complete and all fees have been paid. If your renewal is delayed, you may experience a lapse in certification. (*See Warning about Lapsed Certification, below*). You are encouraged to submit your renewal application well in advance of your certification expiration date to ensure that there is no gap in your certification. It is your responsibility to keep track of your certification expiration date. There is no grace period.

### Helpful Hints:

- ▶ Visit the ANCC website on a regular basis to download the most current renewal requirements. Certification renewal criteria can change to reflect changes in practice or regulatory requirements.
- ▶ Develop a plan to show evidence of continual competence requirements for certification renewal.
- ▶ Provide ANCC with any changes to your contact information, including a preferred email address.
- ▶ Maintain an active registered nurse license.

## Certification Reactivation

If your certification has lapsed, you may reactivate it. There is no “grace period” and your reactivated certification will not be backdated to the date on which your last certification period expired. The procedure to reactivate your ANCC certification depends on the amount of time that has passed since the certification expiration date and portfolio assessment availability.

If it has been **2 years or less** since your certification expired, you can reactivate it using a combination of professional development plus a minimum of 600 practice hours in your certification specialty within the past 3 years from the date you submit your application. If you do not have the practice hours, you can reactivate by professional development and submitting a new portfolio. *(Note that this option is not available if your certification through portfolio has been retired. See Warning about Lapsed Certification, below).* You will need to pay the certification renewal fee plus the additional reactivation fee, and you must meet the requirements in effect at the time you submit your application. Applications received without the correct fee and supporting documentation are considered incomplete and the reactivation process will be delayed until the application is complete and all fees have been paid.

If it has been **more than 2 years** since your certification expired and certification through portfolio in your specialty is still offered, you can reactivate your ANCC certification by a combination of professional development plus portfolio submission. You will need to pay the certification renewal fee plus the additional reactivation fee, and you must meet the requirements in effect at the time you submit your application. Applications received without the correct fees and supporting documentation are considered incomplete and the reactivation process will be delayed until the application is complete and all fees have been paid. If your certification through portfolio has been retired, this option is not available.

**Warning about Lapsed Certification:** Lapsed certification can be reactivated. If you do not renew your certification before it expires, you will have a gap in your certification dates because your certification reactivation will begin when your application is approved. When there is a gap in certification dates, ANCC cannot backdate certification dates to meet regulatory, reimbursement, or other requirements for practice or employment. ANCC may notify your licensing authority of the lapse in your certification. If your certification lapses, you should check with your state licensing board, your employer, and/or the agency that is reimbursing your services to determine if you can continue to practice and/or receive reimbursement for services while you are in the process of reactivating your certification.

**Warning about Retired Certification through Portfolio:** If the certification through portfolio option in your specialty is retired, you should timely renew it or seek reactivation within two years from the date on which your certification expired. The only way to renew or reactivate retired certification through portfolio is by using professional development and clinical practice hours; certification through portfolio that has been retired cannot be renewed or reactivated by resubmission. Accordingly, there is no option to reactivate certification more than two years after it expired.

You should check with your state licensing board, your employer, and the agency that is reimbursing your services to determine if you can continue to practice and/or receive reimbursement for services while you are in the process of reactivating your certification.

If you have multiple certifications that have expired, you will need to meet all certification renewal requirements for each expired certification and submit an application with the renewal fee and reactivation fee for each certification you are choosing to reactivate.

## APPEAL

Please refer to [www.nursecredentialing.org/CertificationAppealProcedure.aspx](http://www.nursecredentialing.org/CertificationAppealProcedure.aspx) for the policy on Appeals.

## DENIAL, SUSPENSION, AND REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATION

Certification can be denied, suspended, or revoked for cause, including but not limited to the following:

- ▶ Failing to complete or provide evidence of completion of the requirements for initial certification, certification renewal, or reactivation of certification
- ▶ Failure to maintain the required professional licensure
- ▶ Determination that initial certification or certification renewal was improperly granted or that certification was improperly reactivated
- ▶ Falsification or misstatement of information on any certification-related document
- ▶ Providing false or misleading information
- ▶ Misrepresentation
- ▶ Cheating or assisting others to cheat
- ▶ Plagiarism
- ▶ Causing, creating, or participating in an assessment irregularity
- ▶ Assisting others to wrongfully obtain initial certification or to renew or reactivate certification
- ▶ Failure to comply with the scope and standards of practice in an area in which ANCC certification is held
- ▶ Failure to comply with the American Nurses Association's Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements
- ▶ Conduct unbecoming of the nursing profession

### Reporting Revocation

To Licensing Authorities: Suspension and revocation of certification is reported to licensing authorities.

To Others: ANCC may report suspension or revocation of certification to employers, legal authorities, third-party payers, and other third parties, including but not limited to law enforcement officers or agencies.

## HOW TO USE YOUR NEW CREDENTIALS

Learn how to properly use your certification credentials at <http://nursecredentialing.org/DisplayCredentials-Brochure.pdf>.

Misuse or misrepresentation of ANCC credentials may result in denial, suspension or revocation of certification and other appropriate action.



The mission of the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), a subsidiary of the American Nurses Association (ANA), is to promote excellence in nursing and health care globally through credentialing programs. ANCC's internationally renowned credentialing programs certify and recognize individual nurses in specialty practice areas. It recognizes healthcare organizations that promote nursing excellence and quality patient outcomes, while providing safe, positive work environments. In addition, ANCC accredits health care organizations that provide and approve continuing nursing education. It also offers educational materials to support nurses and organizations as they work toward their credentials.

ANCC's Certification Program enables nurses to demonstrate their specialty expertise and validate their knowledge to employers and patients. Through targeted assessments that incorporate the latest nursing practice standards, ANCC certification empowers nurses with pride and professional satisfaction.



8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 400  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-4392

1.800.284.2378  
301.628.5000 tel  
301.628.5004 fax